

More Russians find ways around sweeping U.S. asylum limits

By ELLIOT SPAGAT and EUGENE GARCIA

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Maksim Derzhko calls it one of the most terrifying experiences of his life. A longtime opponent of Russian President Vladimir Putin, he flew from Vladivostok to the Mexican border city of Tijuana with his 14-year-daughter and was in a car with seven other Russians. All that separated them from claiming asylum in the United States was a U.S. officer standing in traffic as vehicles inched toward inspection booths. The emotions are "hard to put into words," he says. "It's fear. The unknown. It's really hard. We had no choice."

The gamble worked. After spending a day in custody, Derzhko was released to seek asylum with his daughter, joining thousands of Russians who have recently taken the same route to America.

Continued on next page



Dmitry Nikonov, of Moscow, holds a sign that reads "Stop Putin" with the colors of the flag of Ukraine as he protests in front of the Embassy of Russian Federation in Washington, Monday, March 7, 2022.

Associated Press

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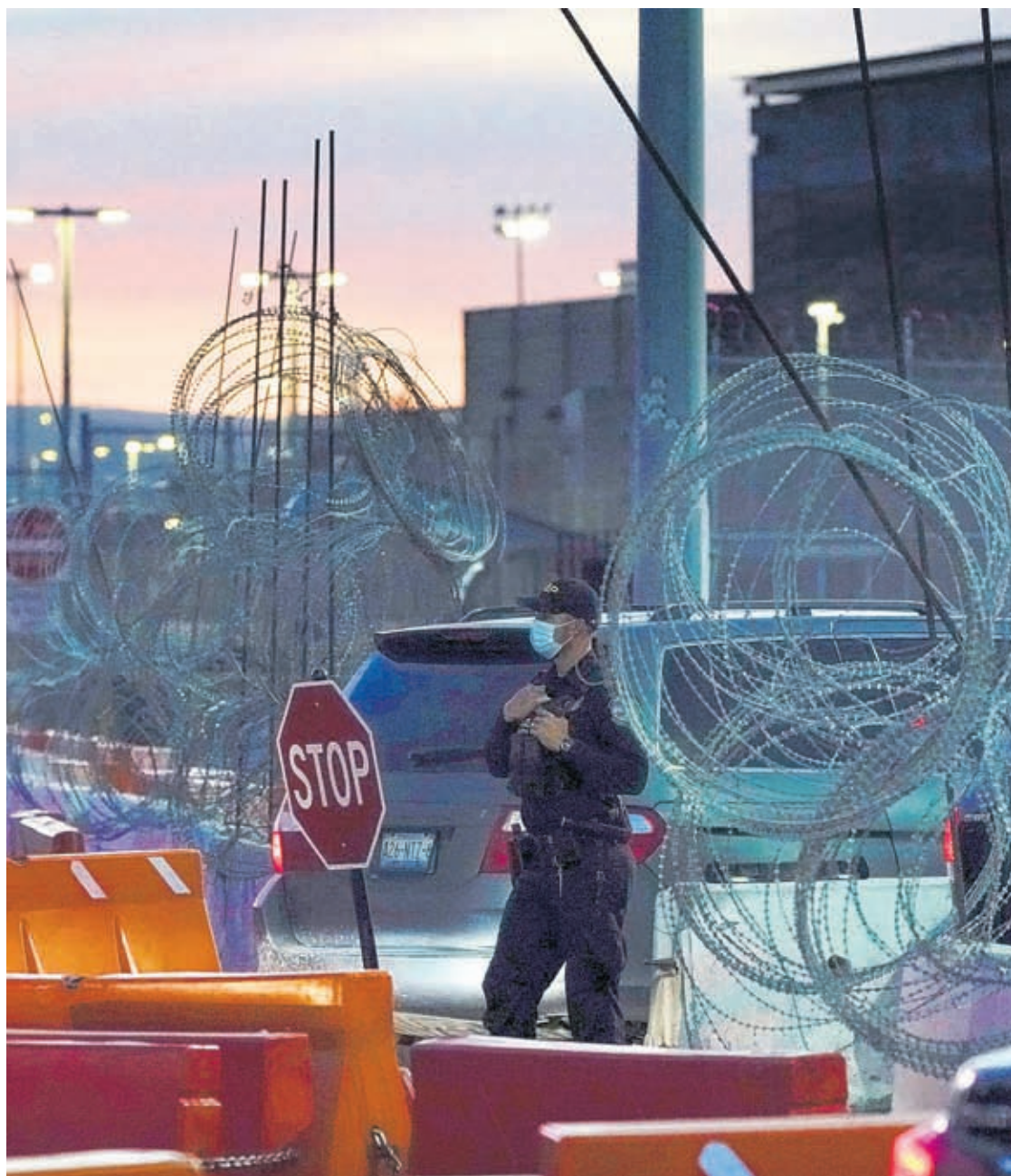
Even before Russia's invasion of Ukraine led to punishing sanctions from the U.S. and its allies, the United States was already seeing an increase in Russian asylum-seekers. More than 8,600 Russians sought refuge on the U.S. border with Mexico from August through January — 35 times the 249 who did so during the same period a year earlier. Nine in 10 used official border crossings in San Diego.

Migrants from other former Soviet republics follow the same route in lower numbers, though some authorities are now anticipating more Ukrainians. The U.S. admitted a Ukrainian family of four on humanitarian grounds Thursday after twice blocking her.

Russians do not need visas to visit Mexico, unlike the U.S. Many fly from Moscow to Cancun, entering Mexico as tourists, and go to Tijuana, where they pool money to squeeze into cars they buy or rent. Adrenaline rushes as they approach San Diego's San Ysidro border crossing, where about 30,000 cars enter the United States daily.

Concrete barriers funnel 24 lanes of traffic to a border marked by a few rows of yellow reflector bumps — like the ones that divide highway lanes — before vehicles reach inspection booths. A buffer zone separates the bumps from the inspection booths.

Migrants just have to reach that buffer zone to claim asylum on U.S. soil. But U.S. officers stationed on the Mexican side of the border first try to block them, peering into vehicles, motioning motorists to flash travel documents and stopping cars they deem suspicious. "It was a very scary moment for all of us to experience," Derzhko, who crossed in August, said in an interview at his home in Los Angeles.



A Customs and Border Protection officer stands at the entrance to the San Ysidro Port of Entry Wednesday, March 2, 2022, seen from Tijuana, Mexico.

"The children with us, everyone was very worried, very much."

Russians swap travel tips on social media and messaging services. One unidentified man narrated his trip from Moscow's Red Square to a San Diego hotel room, with layovers in Cancun and Mexico City.

His YouTube video shows him confessing to nerves after buying a used car in Tijuana, but he says later in San Diego that everything went smoothly — despite two days in U.S. custody — and that others considering the journey shouldn't be afraid.

Russians are virtually guar-

anteed a shot at asylum if they touch U.S. soil, even though President Joe Biden has kept sweeping, Trump-era asylum restrictions. Border agents can deny migrants a chance to seek asylum on the grounds that it risks spreading COVID-19. But cost, logistics and strained diplomatic relations make it difficult to send people of some nationalities home.

Russians and others from former Soviet republics favor driving through official crossings, rather than trying to cross illegally in deserts and mountains. They generally do not hire smugglers, but "a facilitator" may

help arrange travel, said Chad Plantz, special agent in charge of Homeland Security Investigations in San Diego.

While Moscow to Cancun is the most common route, some Russians fly from Amsterdam or Paris to Mexico City and then go to Tijuana, Plantz said.

It has produced some tense confrontations.

In one, a 29-year-old Russian man accelerated after passing the reflector bumps at San Ysidro on Dec. 12 and slammed the brakes, causing a sedan with six Russian asylum-seekers to hit him from behind. An officer fired four shots but no one was injured by gunfire, according to CBP, which says the incident is under investigation.

The SUV driver hit the gas in a state of excitement when he saw an opening between lanes, his lawyer, Martin Molina, told a judge earlier this month. Eleven

other Russians, including the man's wife, 5-year-old daughter and year-old son were in the SUV. Passengers raised their hands and yelled, "Asylum!"

"All that he saw were the bright lights of San Ysidro," Molina said. "He wanted to get there."

The judge ordered the driver released after nearly three months in jail. The Associated Press is not identifying him at the request of Molina, who said his client feared exposure may jeopardize his safety. The man, who opposed Russian intervention in the Chechnya region, planned to seek asylum with his family in Brooklyn, New York.

Other incidents have raised security concerns, Plantz said. Also on Dec. 12, the driver of a car with migrants from Ukraine and Tajikistan ignored an officer's orders to show identification and struck the officer's hand with a car door mirror when accelerating past him, according to court documents.

"They're probably a little disoriented themselves, not sure exactly what they're doing, but they are failing to yield, hitting the gas, blowing through," Plantz said.

A federal judge in San Diego has ruled it is illegal to block asylum-seekers but has not given specific instructions, allowing authorities to continue their practices. Erika Pinheiro, litigation and policy director for Al Otro Lado, an advocacy group that sued over asylum limits at border crossings, said U.S. authorities coordinate with Mexican officials to keep migrants from reaching the buffer zone.

Yuliya Pashkova, a San Diego attorney who represents Russian asylum-seekers, traces the spike in arrivals to the imprisonment of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny last year. Asylum-seekers include Putin opponents, gay people, Muslims and business owners who have been extorted by authorities.

"When they think of America, they think of freedom, democracy and, frankly, a good economic situation," she said. □



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House Dems seek probe of USPS plan for new mail truck fleet

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats on the House Oversight Committee are seeking an investigation into a U.S. Postal Service plan to replace its aging mail trucks with mostly gasoline-powered vehicles.

The plan largely ignores White House calls to replenish the mail-service fleet with electric vehicles and has drawn sharp criticism from the Biden administration, Democratic lawmakers and environmentalists, who say it falls far short of President Joe Biden's goals to address climate change. In a letter Monday, Democrats on the oversight panel asked the agency's inspector general to investigate whether the Postal Service complied with the National Environmental Policy Act and other laws when awarding a 10-year contract to Wisconsin-based Oshkosh Defense to supply up to 165,000 new mail trucks.

Only 10% of the initial order will be for EVs; the remaining 90% will use traditional gasoline-powered engines. The Environmental Protection Agency, the White House Council on Environmental Quality and "numerous environmental



In this Aug. 18, 2020, photo, mail delivery vehicles are parked outside a post office in Boys Town, Neb.

Associated Press

stakeholders" have raised concerns that the Postal Service did not meet its NEPA obligations in issuing the contract, the lawmakers said in a letter to Tammy Whitcomb, the Postal Service inspector general. "Given the substantial public interest in this acquisition and the significant deficiencies" in the environmental analysis

identified by EPA and the White House, "it is critical that Congress understand whether the Postal Service properly met its statutory environmental obligations," the lawmakers wrote. The letter is signed by five Democratic lawmakers, including Rep. Carolyn Maloney of New York, the panel's chair, and Gerry Connolly of Virginia, chair-

man of a subcommittee on government operations. The lawmakers said they strongly support purchase of electric vehicles for the Postal Service fleet, saying it would "significantly cut emissions and position the Postal Service as an environmental leader" in the U.S. A spokeswoman said the inspector general's office

received the letter Monday and was reviewing it.

The Postal Service awarded Oshkosh Defense a contract worth up to \$11 billion over 10 years to replace its 230,000-vehicle fleet. The company has said it will make the Next Generation Delivery Vehicles at a reconfigured warehouse in South Carolina, creating 1,000 new jobs.

The Postal Service said last month that it believes it has met all its obligations and is moving forward despite widespread criticism.

The agency "carefully reviewed and incorporated feedback" from EPA and the White House regarding the new contract and believes "there is no legal or other basis to delay the (vehicle-replacement) program," said spokeswoman Kim Frum.

The new contract will deliver 5,000 electric vehicles beginning in 2023 and "provides significant environmental benefits through the introduction of safer and more environmentally friendly vehicles," Frum said. Flexibility built into the contract allows for more electric vehicles "should additional funding become available," she added. □

Zelenskyy to deliver virtual address to U.S. Congress

By LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will deliver a virtual address to the U.S. Congress as the Russian war on his country intensifies.

Zelenskyy will speak Wednesday to members of the House and Senate, the Democratic leaders announced. The event will be livestreamed for the public. "It's such a privilege to have this leader of this country, where these people are fighting for their democracy and our democracy," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Monday during an event at the Brooklyn Bridge with New York lawmakers.

Pelosi said that Zelenskyy asked for the meeting

when they spoke at the end of last week, and lawmakers are "thrilled" to have him address Congress.

The talk comes as the Ukrainians are fighting for their country's survival in the escalating war as Russian President Vladimir Putin intensifies his assault, including airstrikes on the capital Kyiv. Civilians in Ukraine are taking up arms to hold back Putin's regime, but the war has launched a mass exodus of more than 2 million people from Ukraine.

"The Congress, our country and the world are in awe of the people of Ukraine," said Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer in a statement Monday announcing the address.

They said all lawmakers are invited to the talk that will

be delivered via video at the U.S. Capitol. It comes as Congress recently approved \$13.6 billion in emergency military and humanitarian aid for Ukraine. Biden is expected to sign a big spending bill containing Ukraine aid into law on Tuesday.

During Pelosi's call last week, Zelenskyy said his country would need help rebuilding from the war.

"We have to do more in terms of meeting the needs of some of the 2.7 million refugees," she said.

She said of the Ukrainians: "They're fighting for democracy writ large."

In their statement Monday, the congressional leaders said Congress "remains unwavering in our commitment to supporting Ukraine



In this image from video provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office and posted on Facebook early Saturday, March 12, 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaks in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Associated Press

as they face Putin's cruel and diabolical aggression." Pelosi and Schumer said they intend "to convey our support to the people of Ukraine as they bravely de-

fend democracy." Zelenskyy spoke by video with House and Senate lawmakers earlier this month, delivering a desperate plea for more military aid. □

Man sought in homeless killings in New York, Washington D.C.

By **BOBBY CAINA CALVAN**
and **ASHRAF KHALIL**
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A search was underway Monday for a gunman who has been stalking homeless men sleeping on the streets of Washington, D.C., and New York City, fatally shooting two people and wounding three more in less than two weeks.

Police released surveillance photographs of the suspected gunman late Sunday, including one in which the hooded man can be seen holding a pistol in a blue glove.

The killer's motive — if any — was unknown and authorities turned their attention Monday to trying to offer what protections they could to homeless people who might become targets.

New York Mayor Eric Adams said police officers and homeless outreach teams would focus on finding unhoused people in the subways and other locations and would urge them to seek refuge at city-owned shelters.

"The case is a clear and horrific intentional act of taking the life of someone, it appears, because he was homeless," Adams said at a news conference late Sunday. "Two individuals



These images taken from surveillance video and provided by the New York Police Department show a man suspected of shooting two homeless people on Saturday, March 12, 2022 in New York.

Associated Press

were shot while sleeping on the streets, not committing a crime but sleeping on the streets."

In Washington, city outreach workers were passing out flyers among the homeless population, urging people to "be vigilant" and featuring multiple pictures of the suspect.

"Our shelters have space and are ready to welcome residents needing a place to stay," the flyers stated.

The latest violence under-

scored the urgency to get the homeless off the streets and into safe housing, said Jacquelyn Simone, the policy director for the Coalition for the Homeless in New York City.

"The reason that these people were attacked is because they didn't have that safety of permanent housing," she said. "And that's why we really need to use these tragedies as an opportunity to redouble our efforts to ensure that

people have a better option than the streets where they're exposed to both the elements as well as people who might wish to do them harm."

Simone and other advocates for the homeless called on the city to use vacant hotel rooms for temporary shelter for those who would rather stay on the streets rather than opt in dormitory-style housing. The earliest known shooting happened at around 4

a.m. on March 3 in Washington D.C., police said, when a man was shot and wounded in the city's Northeast section. A second man was wounded on March 8, just before 1:30 a.m.

At 3 a.m. the next day, March 9, police and firefighters found a dead man inside a burning tent. A subsequent autopsy revealed that the man had died of multiple stab and gunshot wounds.

The killer then apparently traveled north to New York City, police said.

At 4:30 a.m. Saturday, a 38-year-old man sleeping on the street in Manhattan not far from the entrance to the Holland Tunnel was shot in his right arm as he slept.

The victim screamed and the gunman fled, police said.

About 90 minutes later, the gunman fatally shot another man on Lafayette Street in SoHo, police said. The man's body was found in his sleeping bag just before 5 p.m. Saturday.

Police determined the same person committed the attacks based on the similarities of each shooting and evidence recovered from the scenes. The victims were attacked without provocation, police said. □

Maryland's last public Confederate monument removed



Crews remove the stone base of the Talbot Boys Statue, Maryland's last public Confederate statue, on the grounds of the Talbot County Courthouse, Monday, March 14, 2022, in Easton, Md.

Associated Press

By **JULIO CORTEZ**
Associated Press

EASTON, Md. (AP) — A statue that was thought to be

the last Confederate monument on a courthouse lawn in Maryland was removed Monday.

The "Talbot Boys Statue" was removed first and workers then loaded the stone base onto a flatbed truck by crane as small crowd watched. Some passing motorists who asked what was happening, cheerfully replied, "finally!" when they heard the news.

"Hallelujah!" said Sheryl Goodspeed of Easton. "I was very happy."

The statue that stood on the Talbot County courthouse lawn in Easton for a century was thought to be the last Confederate monument still standing on public property in Maryland other than cemeteries and battlefields. The 13-foot (3.9-meter) tall, copper sculpture features a boy

holding a Confederate flag and names the men from the Eastern Shore county who joined the Confederacy and died in the war.

After the county council voted to approve its removal in September, the Move the Monument Coalition raised more than \$80,000 to relocate the statue to Cross Keys Battlefield in Harrisonburg, Virginia, according to Ridgely Ochs, a member of the coalition's leadership team. The historic battlefield is in the care of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.

Many memorials to the Confederacy were taken down in the wake of the 2020 death of George Floyd, a Black man who

died in Minneapolis police custody.

The monuments have long been viewed by many as symbols of white supremacy.

The effort to remove this statue, not the first, grew out of people's desire to do something concrete after Floyd's death, Ochs said.

"We're all extraordinarily and profoundly happy that it has happened," Ochs said. "It's gone. It went well. It was peaceful and respectful."

The Southern Poverty Law Center said that about 700 Confederate statues are still positioned near government buildings and in other public places throughout the United States. □

Russian missile strike near NATO's Poland stirs anxiety

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — A Russian missile attack that killed at least 35 people in western Ukraine, some 15 miles from NATO member Poland, has stirred anxiety and spurred Poles to rush to passport offices and stockpile essentials amid fears the war could cut off supplies, or even spill over into Poland.

A long line of applicants, unseen for decades, formed Monday outside Warsaw's main passport office on Krucza Street. Canned food, bottled water, flashlights and batteries filled shoppers' baskets. People in the street talked of the latest news and their worries for the future.

In the street, outside the passport office, Justyna Winnicka, 44, was filling out the passport form for her 16-year-old daughter, Michalina.

"We want to have a passport because the last one expired and we want to be able to go on vacation, but also want to be able to travel abroad in case something happens here in Poland," Winnicka told The Associated Press.

Asked if she was afraid because of the fighting just across Poland's border, she said "Everybody is a little bit afraid today."



A Polish border guard carries a child as he helps people fleeing Ukraine to cross at the Ukrainian-Polish border crossing in Korczowa, Poland, Saturday, March 5, 2022.

Associated Press

"We all believe that the fact that we are in NATO will protect us in some way, but each of us also remembers the history of World War II and the (failed) alliances of those times," Winnicka said. "Things can turn out in different ways. In Poland people are a bit afraid," she said.

On Sunday, Anna Kwiatkowska, 42, a mother of two, said a friend working for a foreign firm had advised the family to have

their passports ready and some dollars, too.

"So I will apply for passports to be done for my children," said Kwiatkowska, whose children, aged 10 and 8, have not traveled abroad yet.

All this despite the fact that NATO, to which former Eastern bloc nation Poland has belonged since 1999, is strengthening its military presence in eastern Poland, close to the Ukraine border, and stresses that

the alliance is fulfilling its task of ensuring Poland's safety.

But Russia's strike Sunday on a Ukrainian military training center in Yavoriv, less than 15 miles (25 kilometers) from the border with Poland, shook the confidence of Poles living near the border and created anxiety among others all to aware of Russia's and the Soviet Union's past control of Poland's territory.

Prime Minister Mateusz

Morawiecki said the attack, close to a refugee route to Poland, was also intended to "provoke panic among civilians" fleeing the "horrors of the war."

Poland has taken in more than 1.8 million refugees from Ukraine — nearly all women and children — since Feb. 24, when Russian troops invaded Ukraine and then unleashed attacks on hospitals, schools and residential areas.

Morawiecki said that the Yavoriv attack and those on civilians are aimed at "destroying this humanitarian effort ... of help being offered to innocent people, women, children."

Poland's deputy foreign minister, Marcin Przydacz, said he does not believe that Russia, which he asserted "visibly is not coping in Ukraine" would try an attack on a NATO country.

Nevertheless, he stressed "one should be cautious and we are being cautious."

People in the capital, Warsaw, in central Poland, were all too cognizant of the potential threat to Eastern bloc nations that, like Poland, were once under the control of the Soviet Union, for more than four decades after World War II. □

Germany to buy US-made F-35s to replace aging bombers

BERLIN (AP) — Germany said Monday that it will replace some of its aging Tornado bomber jets with U.S.-made F-35A Lightning

II aircraft capable of carrying nuclear weapons. Announcing the decision, Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht said Germany

also will upgrade its Eurofighter Typhoon fighter jets for electronic warfare — a capability that's also currently fulfilled by the Tornado jets. The Eurofighter will be replaced from 2040 with the Future Combat Air System, or FCAS, that's being jointly developed with France and Spain, she said.

Germany's air force commander, Ingo Gerhartz, said the current war in Ukraine made it necessary to choose Lockheed Martin's F-35s. Previously, the government had considered replacing the Luftwaffe's Tornados with a mix of different U.S. and European-made aircraft.

"There can be only one answer to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's aggression," said Gerhartz. "Unity in NATO and a credible deterrent. This in particular means there is no alternative but to choose the F-35."

The German military does not have nuclear weapons of its own, but as part of the system of nuclear deterrence developed during the Cold War it maintained bombers capable of carrying U.S. atomic bombs, some of which are stationed in Germany.

The opposition Left Party criticized the decision to purchase almost three dozen F-35s for Germany's

military.

"We reject arming the Bundeswehr with new, nuclear-capable combat jets," said Ali Al-Dailami, the party's deputy defense spokesman. He warned that equipping German pilots to drop U.S. atomic bombs could "fuel the risk of nuclear war in Europe." German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced last month that the country would create a special fund of 100 billion euros (\$113 billion) to bolster its armed forces and raise defense spending above 2% of gross domestic product, a measure on which it had long lagged behind other NATO countries on. □



F-35B aircraft pass on a runway after landing at the Akrotiri Royal air forces base near city of Limassol, Cyprus, Tuesday, May 21, 2019.

Associated Press

Red Cross chief: Ukraine war 'nothing short of a nightmare'

By JON GAMBRELL

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) —

The ongoing Russian war on Ukraine has become "nothing short of a nightmare" for those living in besieged cities, a top Red Cross official said Monday, calling for safe passage out for civilians and humanitarian aid to be allowed through the front lines.

Robert Mardini, the director-general of the International Committee of the Red Cross, also called the war "catastrophic" for civilians affected by the fighting as people run out of drinking water, food, medical supplies and fuel for heating particularly in the surrounded Ukrainian city of Mariupol. Medical facilities also continue to be targeted in attacks.

And while the Red Cross continues to speak with Russian and Ukrainian leaders, Mardini said there's so far been no established routes for people to safely leave Mariupol and some other areas facing intense warfare.

"People are in desperate need to take shelter, and this is why the situation cannot, cannot continue like this," he told The As-



International Committee of the Red Cross Director-General Robert Mardini talks about the humanitarian situation in Ukraine during an interview with The Associated Press, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, March 14, 2022.

Associated Press

sociated Press while on a visit to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. "History is watching what is happening in Mariupol and other cities and civilians must be protected. So whether (it's) a cease-fire, or a combination of a cease-fire and

safe evacuation of civilians, is an absolute must." Russia began its war on Ukraine on Feb. 24 after amassing troops on its borders as part of what Moscow initially described as a series of training exercises. In the time since, Russian

forces have attacked cities, military bases and even the biggest nuclear power plant in Europe while apparently trying to dislodge Kyiv's democratic government, which has seen an outpouring of military aid and support though not

direct military intervention from the West.

The Geneva-based Red Cross, which aids those affected by war and tries to educate combatants of the rules of armed conflict, has 600 staffers in Ukraine and plans to send in around 100 more. Some Red Cross vehicles have been damaged by shrapnel or hit by fire, though its staffers don't believe it has been directly targeted, Mardini said.

However, he acknowledged the dire situation faced by medical facilities in the country. There have been at least 31 attacks on medical facilities and ambulances in the war, killing at least 12 people and wounding 34 others, according to the World Health Organization.

"This is a tragedy of armed conflict happening in densely populated areas and where explosive weapons with large radius are used," Mardini said.

"And we've seen neighborhoods that have been damaged, flattened, and some hospitals have (been shelled), which, of course, is unacceptable because hospitals are protected by international humanitarian law." □

Dutch, Australians launch case against Moscow over MH17

AMSTERDAM (AP) — The Dutch and Australian governments have launched a legal case against Russia at the International Civil Aviation Organization seeking to hold Moscow accountable for its alleged role in the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17.

The case announced Monday in The Hague and Canberra is the latest bid to hold Russia legally responsible for the missile strike that brought down the passenger jet over eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014, killing all 298 people on board.

An international investigation concluded that the Amsterdam-to-Kuala Lumpur flight was shot down from territory held by separatist rebels using a Buk missile system that was driven into Ukraine from a Russian

military base and then returned to the base. Moscow denies involvement. The Dutch government said the timing of the case isn't connected to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but alluded

to the devastating conflict in its announcement. Foreign Affairs Minister Wopke Hoekstra stressed that the Dutch government would continue to do all it can to hold Russia respon-

sible.

"The deaths of 298 civilians, including 196 Dutch citizens, cannot remain without consequences," he said. "The current events in Ukraine underscore the crucial importance of that."

The Australian government said in a statement that "Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine and the escalation of its aggression underscores the need to continue our enduring efforts to hold Russia to account for its blatant violation of international law and the U.N. Charter, including threats to Ukraine's sovereignty and airspace."

Among the victims were 38 residents of Australia.

The latest legal action comes as the Dutch murder trial in absentia of three

Russians and a Ukrainian for their alleged roles in the downing of MH17 continues. Verdicts are expected late this year. Prosecutors have sought life sentences for the suspects. Three of the suspects have boycotted the trial, one is represented by a Dutch legal team, which insists he is innocent.

The new ICAO case follows Russia's decision to walk away in October 2020 from negotiations with the Netherlands and Australia over state responsibility for the flight's downing.

Dutch Infrastructure Minister Mark Harbers said the latest legal action is aimed at securing international recognition "that Russia is responsible for the MH17 disaster. Next of kin have a right to that." □



Judges and lawyers view the reconstructed wreckage of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17, at the Gilze-Rijen military Airbase, southern Netherlands, on May 26, 2021.

Associated Press

Somaliland's leader makes pitch for autonomy in Washington

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP)

— The leader of Somalia's semi-autonomous region of Somaliland has urged the international community to recognize his territory's quest for independence, saying negotiations with Somalia had failed.

Muse Bihi Abdi charged that in a decade of talks "Somalia has demonstrated a complete lack of interest in meaningful dialogue," forcing Somaliland to press ahead with its quest for international recognition as an independent country.

"Dialogue has failed to achieve its objectives," he said on Monday in Washington at an event hosted by the Heritage Foundation, the conservative policy think tank.

Kevin Roberts, president of the Heritage Foundation, said he believes the "U.S. and Somaliland should be strong partners." In a region beset by violence and the threat of extremists, a relatively calm Somaliland offers the U.S. the possibility of "a truly sustainable partnership" in the Horn of Africa, Roberts said.

"This territory, of its own accord, has stuck with a dem-



A woman and child relax next to a mural of Somaliland's flag, in Hargeisa, Somaliland, a semi-autonomous breakaway region of Somalia, on Feb. 9, 2022.

Associated Press

ocratic system and process for three decades. It hasn't been perfect, just like no democratic system is perfect," he said. "But the old saying is that character is how you behave when no one is watching. Somaliland has stayed faithful to democracy when hardly anyone is noticing."

Abdi, who has been Somaliland's president since 2017, said he was "pursuing all available avenues" in as-

serting his territory's autonomy from Somalia.

"The international community has a moral obligation to support Somaliland's pursuit of international recognition," he said.

Somaliland has no formal diplomatic relations with the U.S., and Abdi said he wants to see the U.S. joining some countries that maintain a diplomatic presence in Hargeisa, the capital.

Somaliland is strategical-

ly located by the Gulf of Aden, and Abdi spoke of recent efforts by his government to refurbish the port of Berbera in efforts to open up the region to global trade.

Somaliland's territory of more than 3 million people broke away from Somalia in 1991 as the country collapsed into warlord-led conflict.

Despite lacking international recognition, Somaliland

has maintained its own independent government, currency and security system. The region has largely succeeded in holding regular elections over the years, including parliamentary polls held last year.

Somaliland's relative stability over the years has sharpened the sense of failure in Somalia, where deadly attacks by Islamic extremists are frequently reported and elections have been delayed because there is no agreement on how the vote should be carried out. Somalia still sees Somaliland as part of its territory.

It remains unclear how the Somali federal government will respond to Somaliland's move to seek international recognition as an independent country. Since 2012 several rounds of talks over possible unification have failed to reach a breakthrough.

Abdi said in his speech Monday that the war in Ukraine brought back painful memories of deadly military conflict with Somalia.

"We feel the pain and anguish that the people of Ukraine feel because we went through the same experience," he said. □

Julian Assange denied permission to appeal by UK's top court

By SYLVIA HUI and JILL LAWLESS

LONDON (AP) — Britain's top court on Monday refused WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange permission to appeal against a decision to extradite him to the U.S. to face spying charges.

The court said it refused because the case "didn't raise an arguable point of law." Assange, 50, has sought for years to avoid a trial in the U.S. on a series of charges related to WikiLeaks' publication of a huge trove of classified documents more than a decade ago.

The case is now expected to be formally sent to British Home Secretary Priti Patel, who will decide whether to grant the extradition.

A British district court judge had initially rejected a U.S. extradition request on the grounds that Assange was

likely to kill himself if held under harsh U.S. prison conditions. U.S. authorities later provided assurances that the WikiLeaks founder wouldn't face the severe treatment that his lawyers said would put his physical and mental health at risk.

In December, the High Court overturned the lower court's decision, saying that the U.S. promises were enough to guarantee that Assange would be treated humanely.

Monday's news narrows Assange's options, but his defense team may still seek to take his case to the European Court of Human Rights. Nick Vamos, the former head of extradition at the Crown Prosecution Service, said Assange's lawyers can also seek to challenge other points that he had lost in the original district court

decision.

Barry Pollack, Assange's U.S.-based lawyer, said Monday that it was "extremely disappointing" that Britain's Supreme Court is unwilling to hear the appeal.

"Mr. Assange will continue the legal process fighting his extradition to the United States to face criminal charges for publishing truthful and newsworthy information," he said.

Assange's British lawyers, Birnberg Peirce Solicitors, said they can make submissions to the Home Secretary within the next four weeks, ahead of her making any decision.

American prosecutors say Assange unlawfully helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal classified diplomatic cables and military files that



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange greets supporters from a balcony of the Ecuadorian embassy in London, May 19, 2017.

Associated Press

WikiLeaks later published, putting lives at risk.

But supporters and lawyers for Assange argue that he was acting as a journalist and is entitled to First Amendment protec-

tions of freedom of speech for publishing documents that exposed U.S. military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan. They argue that his case is politically motivated. □

LOCAL



Ike's Bistro unveils vegan smorgasbord

EAGLE BEACH — Ike's bistro at Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa surprises with an excellent, tasteful and varied vegan menu. Executive Chef Sandro Herold is obviously enthusiastic about the new offerings that fill up the place already. "People nowadays are a bit more conscious about what they eat. This menu offers a wide variety with creative vegan food items." We asked some of the guests about their experience: "delicious", "very tasty" "great food, great setting". Even teens, in general not too fond of health food, applauded the offerings. "We did not even miss the meat". Of course the restaurant also offers their extensive regular menu for the non-vegan guests containing all you wish From the Land or From the Sea.

Vegan is hot now, says the chef, and we had that confirmed by several guests. Ike's Bistro is an open air restaurant, located in the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa. Under a huge cabana with a view to the romantically lit pool of the resort you are seated in relaxed chairs and served by great waiters. And not unimportant: Covid-19 safe.

Your senses are tickled because of the purity and freshness of the food items. You may choose for the unknown which is a three-course vegan chef tasting menu that can also be combined with a wine pairing. Or you select your choices from the menu. All dishes are 100% Vegan and are gluten-free unless labeled otherwise.



Start with appetizers like Vegan Fish Taco, Chickpeas Tartare and Avocado, Spicy Buffalo Cauliflower Wings or Vegetable Tempura. Tomato Basil Soup or Lemongrass Carrot Ginger Soup are simply delicious as are the Arugula Jackfruit Salad or Mesclun Salad. For the main course pick your pick: Sesame Ginger Duck (contains gluten), Stuffed Corn Chips and Avocado, Grilled Fish Filet and Roasted Cauliflower or Truffle Porcini Risotto & Grilled Tofu. This heavenly healthy trip reaches its end destination with a scrumptious dessert: Caribbean Snickers, a must-try! All of those choices embrace your inner senses with their freshness and clear flavors.

Vegan might be on the menu in many restaurants nowadays as 'the other option', but here at Ike's Bistro they celebrate vegan and you get hooked, that is a promise. Passion, creativity, purity, dedication to a concept and a beautiful setting take care of an enchanting experience. Vegans and non-vegans are welcome, Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa has got it all covered.☐

Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa – Ike's Bistro

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Exposition 'Aruba Marine Life' at the national library of Aruba

Oranjestad - Artist Luisa Elena Betancourt presented her exposition 'Aruba Marine Life' at our national library in Oranjestad.

This exposition will be open and displayed in the Exposition Room until the 31st of March, available for your viewing pleasure all day. The community of Aruba and our visitors are welcome to see this beautiful exposition.

Artist Luisa Elena Betancourt is an Artist of Venezuelan descent who has been living in Aruba since 2016. Luisa combines her work as an artist with another one of her passions which is underwater photography. Taking pictures of marina life in the stunning beaches of Aruba, Luisa built a collection of marine life photos that are exotic, unique and extensive.

A collection that is full of pictures of fishes, other animals, plants and even corals.

Luisa Elena Betancourt has also produced a book about marine life in our coast, in particular Mangel Halto and Boca Catalina. Her admiration towards marine life brings a lot of inspiration and a unique artistic development. Many pictures inspired the Art-

ist to paint on canvas and create a work of art in the form of digital collages.

The presentation of Luisa's book 'Aruba Marine Life' took place at the library as well. Director of the library Biblioteca Nacional Aruba, Astrid Britten, received 5 copies of the book for the visitors and community to be able to read and lend. Edgard G. A. Vrolijk, president of Aruba's Parliament



also received a copy of the book.

This book is a proof of Aruba's underwater beauty

and will help everyone get to know all the creatures that live in our coasts. A wonderful world to protect and preserve. □

Honoring of loyal visitors at Aruba Blue Village

EAGLE BEACH - Recently, Aruba Tourism Authority representative Mario Arends had the great pleasure to honor a loyal and friendly visitor of Aruba with a certificate. These certificates are a way to say "Masha Danki" for continuously choosing Aruba as a favorite vacation destination. The titles are as following: 10+ years "Distinguished Visitor", 20+ years "Goodwill Ambassador" and 36+ years "Emerald Ambassador".



The honoree was **Marcel Kloos** from Noord Holland who has been honored as a Distinguished Visitor. The symbolic honorary title is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba between 10, 20 and 35 or more consecutive years.

The esteemed visitor loves coming to the island for the great weather, feeling of being the home away from home and all 3 generations of the Kloos family coming together.

Mr. Arends together with the representatives of Aruba Blue Village presented the certificates to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □



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Foreign Trade, Fourth Quarter 2021

Oranjestad - The Central Bureau of Statistics presents the most important findings for the Foreign Trade of the 4th quarter 2021.

Total Import

The total import, in terms of weight, registered an increase of 26.2% in the fourth quarter of 2021 (161.3 mln. kg) compared to the same period in 2020 (127.8 mln. kg), while, in terms of value, the total import increased by 41.7%, from Afl. 439.0 mln. to Afl. 622.1 mln.

Import to the free circulation area of Aruba* (weight)

Import to the free circulation area of Aruba, in terms of weight, registered an increase of 26.4% in the fourth quarter of 2021 (159.0 mln. kg), compared to the same period in 2020 (125.8 mln. kg). During this period, fifteen (15) of the twenty-one (21) sections registered increases in terms of weight in import to the free circulation area of Aruba. The largest increases are observed for the sections "Mineral products" (28.5 mln. kg), "Base metals and derivated works" (1.6 mln. kg), and "Live animals and other animal products" (1.6 mln. kg).

The largest decreases are observed for the sections "Works of stone, gypsum, cement, asbestos" (-1.5 mln. kg), "Chemical products" (-0.5 mln. kg) and "Machinery & electrotechnical equipment (new & renewed)" (-0.3 mln. kg).

Import to the free circulation area of Aruba* (value)

Import to the free circulation area of Aruba, in terms of value, registered an increase of 42.2% in the fourth quarter of 2021 (Afl. 591.2 mln.) compared to the same period in 2020 (Afl. 415.9 mln.). During this period, twenty (20) of the twenty-one (21) sections registered increases in terms of value in import to the free circulation area of Aruba.

The largest increases are observed for the sections "Live animals and other

Table 1 Import by quarter, 2020-2021

in mln. kg	Qtr. 2020				2020	Qtr. 2021				2021	4th Quarter 2020-2021	
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th		1st	2nd	3rd	4th		% change	in mln.
To Aruba by Sea	146.4	76.2	142.4	125.2	490.1	96.8	163.1	113.0	158.2	529.1	26.4	33.0
To Aruba by Air	1.0	0.4	0.5	0.6	2.5	0.6	0.6	1.0	0.8	3.1	42.0	0.2
To Aruba	147.4	76.5	142.9	125.8	492.6	97.4	163.8	113.9	159.0	534.1	26.4	33.2
To the Free Zone	1.1	1.1	0.9	2.0	5.0	1.6	2.0	2.6	2.2	8.4	12.9	0.3
Total Import	148.4	77.6	143.8	127.8	497.6	99.0	165.8	116.5	161.3	542.5	26.2	33.4
By Large companies	24.4	16.8	21.7	20.4	83.4	20.1	21.2	25.6	23.8	90.6	16.5	4.4
By Other companies	123.0	59.7	121.2	105.4	409.3	77.3	142.6	88.4	135.2	443.5	28.3	29.8
To Aruba	147.4	76.5	142.9	125.8	492.6	97.4	163.8	113.9	159.0	534.1	26.4	33.2
in mln. Afl.												
To Aruba by Sea	402.3	201.5	350.8	344.3	1,359.0	313.1	369.3	458.9	477.7	1,619.0	38.7	133.4
To Aruba by Air	95.6	41.2	59.0	71.6	267.4	68.7	91.7	90.8	113.5	264.7	58.6	42.0
To Aruba	497.9	302.7	409.8	415.9	1,626.3	381.8	461.0	549.7	591.2	1,883.7	42.2	175.3
To the Free Zone	12.0	7.5	12.9	23.1	55.4	16.4	25.8	37.2	30.8	110.2	33.5	7.7
Total Import	509.9	310.2	422.7	439.0	1,681.8	398.2	486.7	586.9	622.1	2,093.9	41.7	184.1
By Large companies	54.3	47.4	52.2	34.7	188.5	39.7	39.3	43.6	46.5	169.1	34.2	11.0
By Other companies	443.6	255.4	357.6	381.2	1,437.8	342.1	421.7	506.1	544.7	1,814.6	42.9	163.5
To Aruba	497.9	302.7	409.8	415.9	1,626.3	381.8	461.0	549.7	591.2	1,883.7	42.2	175.3

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Aruba

animal products" (Afl. 24.8 mln.), "Food products" (Afl. 23.8 mln.), "Mineral products" (Afl. 18.7 mln.) and "Real pearls (natural) and other precious stones" (Afl. 17.8 mln.).

The only decrease is observed for the sections "Works of art, collectors pieces and antiques" (Afl. -0.4 mln.).

Import to the free Zone of Aruba

Import to the free Zone of Aruba, in terms of weight, registered an increase of 12.9% in the fourth quarter of 2021 (2.2 mln. kg) compared to the same period in 2020 (2.0 mln. kg), while, in terms of value, it increased by 33.5% from Afl. 23.1 mln. to Afl. 30.8 mln.

The abovementioned Import (to the free calculation area of Aruba) is the result

of Import by Sea and Import by Air, which had the following developments:

Import to the free circulation area of Aruba* by Sea

Import by Sea to the free circulation area of Aruba, in terms of weight, registered an increase of 26.4% in the fourth quarter of 2021 (158.2 mln. kg) compared to the same period in 2020 (125.2 mln. kg), while, in terms of value, the import by Sea increased by 38.7% from Afl. 344.3 mln. to Afl. 477.7 mln.

Import to the free circulation area of Aruba* by Air

Import by Air to the free circulation area of Aruba, in terms of weight, increased by 32.0% from 0.6 mln. kg in the fourth quarter of 2020 to 0.8 mln. kg in the fourth quarter of 2021, while, in terms of value, the import by Air increased by 58.6%

from Afl. 71.6 mln. to Afl. 113.5 mln.

Import to the free circulation area of Aruba* by Large companies

Import by "Large companies", in terms of weight, increased by 16.5% from 20.4 mln. kg in the fourth quarter of 2020 to 23.8 mln. kg in the fourth quarter of 2021, while, in terms of value, it increased by 34.2% from Afl. 34.7 mln. to Afl. 46.5 mln.

Total Export

The total export, in terms of weight, registered an increase of 95.2% in the fourth quarter of 2021 (7.2 mln. kg) compared to the same period of 2020 (5.5 mln. kg), while, in terms of value, the total export increased by 27.7% from Afl. 34.7 mln. to Afl. 44.3 mln.

Export from the free circulation area of Aruba*

(weight)

Export from the free circulation area of Aruba, in terms of weight, registered an increase of 14.5% in the fourth quarter of 2021 (4.9 mln. kg) compared to the same period in 2020 (4.3 mln. kg). Thirteen (13) of the twenty-one (21) sections, registered increases in terms of weight in the export from the free circulation area of Aruba. The largest increases are observed for the sections "Base metals and derivated works" (0.5 mln. kg) and "Materials for the manufacture of paper, paperwork" (0.5 mln. kg).

The largest decreases are observed for the sections "Food products" (-0.2 mln. kg), "Transport equipment" (-0.1 mln. kg) and "Chemical products" (-0.1 mln. kg).

Export from the free circulation area of Aruba* (value)

Export from the free circulation area of Aruba, in terms of value, registered a decrease of 24.0% in the fourth quarter of 2021 (Afl. 12.5 mln.) compared to the same period in 2020 (Afl. 16.5 mln.). Fourteen (14) of the twenty-one (21) sections, registered decreases in terms of value in the export from the free circulation area of Aruba. The largest decreases are observed for the sections "Real pearls (natural) and other precious stones" (Afl. -1.4 mln.), "Optical instruments, apparatus and equipment" (Afl. -1.2 mln.) and "Chemical products" (Afl. -0.6 mln.).

The largest increases are observed for the sections "Works of stone, gypsum, cement, asbestos" (Afl. 0.4 mln.) and "Textile fibers and articles" (Afl. 0.3 mln.).

Export from the free Zone of Aruba

Export from the free Zone of Aruba, in terms of weight, registered an increase of 95.2% in the fourth quarter of 2021 (2.3 mln. kg) compared to the same period in 2020 (1.2 mln. kg), while, in terms of value, it increased by 74.7% from Afl. 18.2 mln. to Afl. 31.8 mln. □

Table 2 Export by quarter, 2020-2021

in mln. kg	Qtr. 2020				2020	Qtr. 2021				2021	4th Quarter 2020-2021	
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th		1st	2nd	3rd	4th		% change	in mln.
From Aruba by Sea	4.1	3.3	3.6	4.2	15.2	3.9	4.7	8.0	4.9	21.4	15.5	0.7
From Aruba by Air	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	-36.0	0.0
From Aruba	4.2	3.4	3.6	4.3	15.4	3.9	4.7	8.1	4.9	21.6	14.5	0.6
From the Free Zone	0.8	0.8	1.4	1.2	4.1	1.0	2.0	2.3	2.3	7.6	95.2	1.1
Total Export	4.9	4.2	5.0	5.5	19.5	4.9	6.7	10.3	7.2	29.2	37.0	1.8
By Large companies	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	77.9	0.0
By Other companies	4.7	3.4	3.6	4.3	15.4	3.9	4.7	8.1	4.9	21.5	14.3	0.6
From Aruba	4.2	3.4	3.6	4.3	15.4	3.9	4.7	8.1	4.9	21.6	14.5	0.6
in mln. Afl.												
From Aruba by Sea	6.8	7.1	8.4	8.0	30.3	6.6	9.0	8.3	6.8	30.7	-15.2	-1.2
From Aruba by Air	8.6	3.3	10.7	8.5	31.0	5.2	11.1	6.1	5.7	28.2	-32.3	-2.7
From Aruba	15.4	10.4	19.1	16.5	61.4	11.8	20.1	14.4	12.5	58.8	-24.0	-4.0
From the Free Zone	10.8	10.6	17.0	18.2	56.6	10.1	26.5	31.0	31.8	99.3	74.7	13.6
Total Export	26.2	21.0	36.1	34.7	118.0	21.9	46.6	45.4	44.3	158.1	27.7	9.6
By Large companies	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.3	-73.7	0.0
By Other companies	15.3	10.4	19.1	16.5	61.2	11.8	19.8	14.4	12.5	58.5	-23.9	-3.9
From Aruba	15.4	10.4	19.1	16.5	61.4	11.8	20.1	14.4	12.5	58.8	-24.0	-4.0

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Aruba

How buy now, pay later loans could alter credit

By LIZ WESTON of NerdWallet

Expanding access to credit is a worthy goal. Too many people can't get a mortgage or an emergency loan at a reasonable rate because they can't show a solid credit history. They may pay more for insurance or make large security deposits to get utilities or rent an apartment.

Recently, the three major credit bureaus announced plans to incorporate "buy now, pay later" plans, a hugely popular type of point-of-sale financing that until now remained mostly outside the traditional credit ecosystem.

But no one should expect that their buy now, pay later purchases will instantly open the door to better credit. If you want reliable access to the largest number of lenders, building credit through traditional means is still the better route.

BUY NOW, PAY LATER LOANS SOAR IN POPULARITY

If you bought anything online recently, you likely encountered a buy now, pay later option that offered to split your purchase into a few installment payments. Retailers partner with lenders such as Affirm, Afterpay and Klarna to offer the payment plans, which typically don't require a hard credit check and may not charge interest. With the popular four payment option, for example, you pay off your balance in four equal, interest-free installments due every other week. Instead of charging interest, lenders get a percentage of what you spend from the retailer, similar to the interchange fees charged by credit cards.

Buy now, pay later services proliferated as the pandemic shifted much shopping online, but the plans are now available for travel and health care and as an option at some brick-and-mortar retail stores. Nearly 100 million people used a buy now, pay later option in the past year, says Liz Pagel, senior vice president of consumer lending for credit bureau TransUnion.



This undated file photo provided by NerdWallet shows Liz Weston, a columnist for personal finance website NerdWallet.com.

Associated Press

Like all easy credit, these plans can tempt people to overspend. Buy now, pay later loans also are largely unregulated and lack the consumer protections that cover credit card and debit purchases. In addition, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is investigating how buy now, pay later lenders use the payment and shopping data they harvest from customers.

CREDIT BUREAUS ARE STILL WORKING OUT THE DETAILS

The credit bureaus want access to that payment data, hoping they can offer more traditional lenders insights into how these bor-

rowers might handle other types of credit.

The bureaus aren't being altruistic, of course. They're private businesses that want to profit. But in doing so, the bureaus could help expand access to credit by identifying borrowers who could likely handle credit among the millions of "invisibles" — people who don't

have a credit history — as well as those who have too little information in their files to generate credit scores. TransUnion's Pagel has called buy now, pay later data the greatest financial inclusion opportunity in a generation.

How the bureaus will go about this is still a work in progress. Two of them,

TransUnion and Experian, say that for now, the information won't be included in regular credit reports, but lenders will be able to request it. The third bureau, Equifax, says it will incorporate the data into people's credit reports. But the leading credit scoring company, FICO, is still studying buy now, pay later data to see how well it predicts how people might handle other credit. There's not even agreement among the bureaus yet about whether the loans should be treated as revolving debt, like credit cards, or as installment loans, which typically last much longer.

"It's such an important question because how it's reported makes a definite difference in how it will impact the score," says Ethan Dornhelm, FICO's vice president of scores and predictive analytics.

HOW YOU CAN BUILD BETTER CREDIT NOW

If you're currently trying to build or rebuild credit, you probably don't want to wait around for these details to get sorted out.

Consider asking someone responsible with credit to add you as an authorized user to their credit card. Other options include a credit-builder loan or a secured credit card from a lender that reports to all three bureaus. Credit-builder loans, offered by credit unions or online, place the money you borrow into a savings account or certificate of deposit that you can reclaim after you make all the monthly payments. A secured credit card typically gives you a line of credit equal to the deposit you make at the issuing bank. These aren't instant fixes for bad or no credit, of course, but they're proven ways to expand your own access to credit now. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 47 Coffee stirrer

1 Match in value
6 Comedy counterpart

11 Use foul language

12 Kick back

13 Very recognizable

15 Keats poem

16 Leather color

17 TV's Danson

18 Entrance hall

20 City-based

23 Last year's frosh

27 Enjoy the tub

28 Bride's wear

29 Scatter

31 Gerald Ford's wife

32 Barber's tool

34 Play division

37 Zodiac cat

38 Airport sight

41 Far from stressful

44 French farewell

45 Hint of color

46 Long stories

DOWN

1 Canyon sound

2 Brit's pound

3 Spur on

4 Fireplace bit

5 Physics particle

6 Unmanned

7 Game official

8 Stepped down

9 Like stallions

10 Cut drastically

14 Beam of sunlight



Yesterday's answer

18 Imposter

19 Fido's pal

20 Battleship letters

21 Go bad

22 Saloon

24 Parrot or puppy

25 Sold-out show

26 Crafty

30 Tusked mammal

31 Increases

33 Last letter

34 Woeful cry

35 Musical close

36 Branch bit

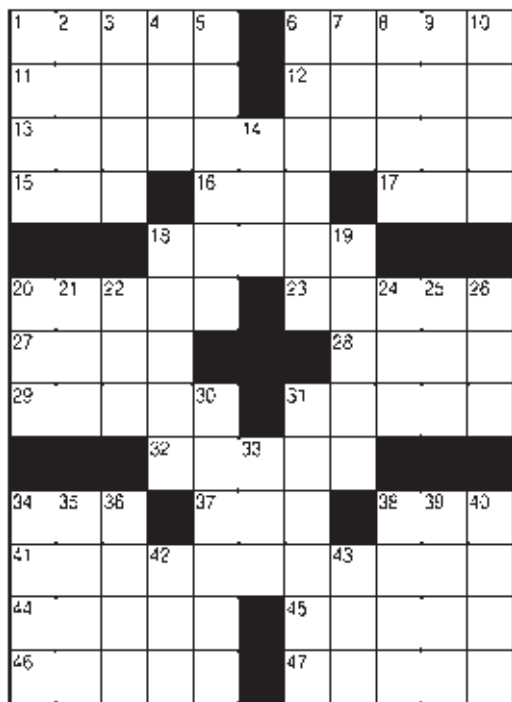
38 Jupiter's wife

39 Therefore

40 New driver, often

42 Pod unit

43 Tentative taste



3-15

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three U's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-15

CRYPTOQUOTE

B Z X K A V B Z W V S F E X K A N E

X W N D F E , V L S E L W G S W

J A D V S A D Z V L S X W N D F E ,

— D U W R S F F S W F F S Z C S

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: GIVING BIRTH IS LIKE TAKING YOUR LOWER LIP AND FORCING IT OVER YOUR HEAD. CAROL BURNETT

War censorship exposes Putin's leaky internet controls



Pages from the U.S. State Department's Global Engagement Center report released on Aug. 5, 2020, are seen in this photo. Associated Press

By FRANK BAJAK and BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writers

BOSTON (AP) — Long before waging war on Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin was working to make Russia's internet a powerful tool of surveillance and social control akin to China's so-called Great Firewall.

So when Western tech companies began cutting ties with Russia following its invasion, Russian investigative journalist Andrei Soldatov was alarmed. He'd spent years exposing Russian censorship and feared that well-intentioned efforts to aid Ukraine would instead help Putin isolate Russians from the free flow of information, aiding the Kremlin's propaganda war. "Look, guys the only space the Russians have to talk about Ukraine, and what is going on in Russia, is Facebook," Soldatov, now exiled in London, wrote on Facebook in the war's first week. "You cannot just, like, kill our access." Facebook didn't, although the Kremlin soon picked up that baton, throttling both Facebook and Twitter so badly they are effectively unreachable on the Russian internet.

Putin has also blocked access to both Western news sites in the country, and a new law criminalizes spreading information that contradicts the government's line. On Friday, the Kremlin said it would also restrict access to Instagram. By early Monday, the network monitor NetBlocks reported the social network throttled across multiple Russian internet providers.

Yet the Kremlin's latest censorship efforts have revealed serious shortcomings in the government's bigger plans to straight-jacket the internet. Any Russian with a modicum of tech smarts can circumvent government efforts to starve Russians of fact. For instance, the government has so far had only limited success blocking the use of software known as virtual private networks, or VPNs, that allows users to evade content restrictions. The same goes for Putin's attempts to restrict the use of other censorship-evading software. That puts providers of internet bandwidth and as-

sociated services sympathetic to Ukraine's plight in a tough spot. On one side, they face public pressure to punish the Russian state and economic reasons to limit services at a time when bills might well go unpaid. On the other, they're wary of helping stifle a free flow of information that can counter Kremlin disinformation — for instance, the state's claim that Russia's military is heroically "liberating" Ukraine from fascists.

Amazon Web Services, a major provider of cloud computing services, continues to operate in Russia, although it says it's not taking on any new customers. Both Cloudflare, which helps shield websites from denial-of-service attacks and malware, and Akamai, which boosts site performance by putting internet content closer to its audience, also continue to serve their Russian customers, with exceptions including cutting off state-owned companies and firms under sanctions. □

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In 'The Adam Project,' a blockbuster therapy session

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

Pathos and action are found in equal parts in "The Adam Project," the latest attempt by Netflix to create the kind of throwback blockbuster that you might have paid to see in movie theaters.

Starring Ryan Reynolds as a time traveling pilot and directed by Shawn Levy, the movie takes the old cliché about what you'd tell your younger self and adds PG-13 snark, space action, "Guardians of the Galaxy" energy, a megalomaniac businesswoman, a dead father and a lost love to the mix. And it's pretty satisfying popcorn fare with some genuinely affecting beats. All that's missing is some Harry Chapin.

This is a project that has been around for a decade — at one point Tom Cruise was attached. But it languished in development and rewrites (there are four screenwriters credited and Jonathan Tropper is the last to have touched it) until Netflix acquired it and in less than two years it's a finished product.

In "The Adam Project," we're introduced to a 40-something Adam (Reynolds) in the middle of a



This image released by Netflix shows Ryan Reynolds, from left, Mark Ruffalo and Walker Scobell in a scene from "The Adam Project."

Associated Press

space chase. He's quick-witted and unflappable, so it's supposed to be jarring to cut back to see middle school Adam (Walker Scobell in his debut) as the little guy with the big mouth who is prone to getting in fights and losing.

Adam and his mom (Jennifer Garner) are hanging on by a thread in the year after they lost his dad (Mark Ruffalo) in an accident. But before things get too real, adult Adam shows up in the past at their house and

breaks all the known time travel rules when he accidentally runs into young Adam. This is a movie universe in which "Back to the Future 2" exists.

Adult Adam isn't there for young Adam, he just needs to treat his wound before going to look for his wife (Zoe Saldana). The older self is dismissive, the younger one is desperate to know when he'll start getting ripped and having luck with girls. Reynolds and Scobell are a good match.

And of course adult Adam is on a journey to make peace with his younger self and his parents — Mom takes five minutes at a bar (it's a good scene) and Dad takes the rest of the film. This is ultimately a film about boys and their dads. Levy is a director who has found a successful lane in studio-made crowd pleasers like "Date Night," "Night at the Museum" and "Free Guy," which also starred Reynolds. While they might not be the kind of things

that are taught in film school, they do have their place as uncynical, nostalgic and rewatchable popcorn fare (even Amblin-esque, if we must) with just enough heart to make you feel like you haven't consumed junk food.

But nostalgia can be a tricky game for people outside of the dominant group and "The Adam Project" filmmakers could benefit from a little post-game introspection about the fact that they've made a loving film about family and forgiveness and made the villain a highly successful businesswoman (Catherine Keener) whose origin story stems from her bitterness about having no husband or children because she devoted her life to work.

Keener looks like she's having enough fun among the special effects and a deg-aged version of herself. But it's hard to shake the feeling that we've somehow gone back to another staple of 1980s films that should have stayed in the past: When single, childless career women were the threats to marriages and domesticity. This, I'm certain, is not part of the retro vibe they were going for but unfortunately they did. □

CNN+ streams start March 29; MSNBC to stream programming



This image shows the logo for the new CNN streaming service CNN+ debuting March 29.

Associated Press

By **DAVID BAUDER**
AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The CNN+ paid streaming service will debut March 29 with programming headlined by network stars like Anderson Cooper, Wolf

Blitzer and Jake Tapper, along with poached personalities Audie Cornish, Kasie Hunt and Chris Wallace.

Customers will be charged \$5.99 a month or \$59.99 to get the service, with a spe-

cial deal for charter subscribers.

CNN's announcement on Friday comes a day after MSNBC said that it will offer much of its television lineup on a time-delayed basis on the Peacock Premium streaming service, which is available for \$4.99 a month. Fox News' Fox Nation service has been operating since 2018, and recently inked actor Kevin Costner to narrate a documentary series on the Yellowstone national park.

News outlets known mostly for television are making some of their most aggressive moves in streaming these days, betting on its growing importance. While broadcast networks ABC, CBS and NBC News each offer breaking news-

oriented streaming services for free, the cable outlets CNN, Fox News and MSNBC will all have products behind pay walls.

CNN+ is a particular priority for that company, and many in the industry are watching to see if its momentum will be stalled by the recent ouster of network chief Jeff Zucker.

Some of its fare will feel familiar, like a traditional daily newscast anchored by Blitzer and a newsletter-like morning look at the day's top stories hosted by Kate Bolduan. Elsewhere, familiar personalities will stretch a little: Cooper will do a show that offers parenting advice, while Tapper interviews newsmaking authors. Wallace, who left Fox News in December, will do a daily

interview show, "Who's Talking to Chris Wallace?" Hunt, formerly of NBC News, will anchor a daily political show. Former NPR personality Cornish will do a weekly interview show, "20 Questions with Audie Cornish." Jemele Hill, Don Lemon, Christiane Amanpour, business expert Scott Galloway and former basketball star Rex Chapman will have programs. CNN+ will also make several original series and films available on demand.

MSNBC said that in early spring that Peacock will offer some fare, like "Morning Joe" and programs hosted by Nicolle Wallace, Ari Melber, Joy Reid and Chris Hayes available on a time-delayed basis on Peacock Premium. □

Sports to deliver at a time they're needed the most

By TIM DAHLBERG

Once again, hope springs eternal, at least on the ballfields in Arizona and Florida. Soon, there will be spring training games and then a season that even the collective greed of Major League Baseball owners and players couldn't derail. Just how much the labor dispute turns off fans is anyone's guess. Baseball has been losing followers for other reasons for some time now, so delaying opening day for a few days may turn out to be a mere blip. And while the game may be deeply flawed, the outpouring of disgust about the lockout was an indication there's a core of passionate followers.

Baseball is back and for that we should all be grateful. That makes this week special all by itself.

But there's more, lots more. Sports are about to deliver, just when we need them the most.

Aside from spring training games, there's the bonus of an MLB free-agency frenzy that will make some teams and remake others. NFL free agency begins, too, kicking off several weeks of offseason intrigue — including Tom Brady's unretirement — that will culminate next month in what will surely be the glitziest draft ever on the Las Vegas Strip. There's a Monday finish at The Player's Championship, which serves as a tasty reminder that the Masters lurks only a few weeks away. No, Tiger Woods won't be playing and Phil Mickelson may not either, but it's a new era in golf that offers a new kind of intrigue.

And, of course, March Madness begins with a bang and any of two dozen teams might have a realistic shot at winning the national championship this year. Filling out brackets has never been tougher but for many there's now opportunity at the sportsbooks, too, if brackets get busted before the week is finished.

It's all a diversion from the serious troubles in the world, as sports often are.

The games solve nothing in the real world, but for a few hours we can forget about things like war and inflation and immerse ourselves into an alternate reality where we know the score and understand the rules.

Two years after the pandemic shut everything down, almost every sport is back at full roar and fully open to fans — masked and unmasked.

It's not just one week, either. The NBA and NHL are deep into the best parts of their seasons, with the playoffs looming in just a few weeks. The Kentucky Derby and Indianapolis 500 don't seem that far away, and there are so many sports crammed in between that the biggest issue for many fans will be figuring out how



New York Yankees fans watch players practice during spring training baseball, Sunday, March 13, 2022, in Tampa, Fla.

Associated Press

to watch them all.

Did I mention there will soon be spring football? Yes the USFL is back in a new iteration for diehard football fans, and this time it may just work because the deep pockets of Fox

Sports are behind it.

Major League Soccer has just begun, and there's probably more happening in soccer, too, but for now we'll just have to be content enjoying the machinations surrounding the forced sale

of the Chelsea club by its soon-to-be former owner, Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich.

And be glad that millionaire players and billionaire owners found enough common ground to give us something resembling a normal season — the schedule and rhythm that are both familiar and reassuring, and the opening of spring training giving us some hope that a good summer will follow.

This week, Clayton Kershaw will be on the mound in Arizona, as will Shohei Ohtani, who will be warming up his bat and his arm. In Florida, Aaron Judge will take his first hacks and the Minnesota Twins will desperately search for some pitching (and bring Sonny Gray into the fold). □



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Tom Brady is returning to Tampa to play 23rd season in NFL

By **ROB MAADDI AP**
Pro Football Writer

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Tom Brady's retirement lasted 40 days.

Brady said Sunday he's returning to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for his 23rd NFL season.

The seven-time Super Bowl champion announced his decision on Twitter and Instagram, saying he has "unfinished business." The news stole the spotlight from the NCAA's Selection Sunday.

"These past two months I've realized my place is still on the field and not in the stands," Brady wrote. "That time will come. But it's not now. I love my teammates, and I love my supportive family. They make it all possible. I'm coming back for my 23rd season in Tampa."

Brady led the Buccaneers to a Super Bowl title following the 2020 season and NFC South championship last season. He teamed with coach Bill Belichick to win six Super Bowls during 20 seasons with the New England Patriots.

The 44-year-old Brady led the NFL in yards passing (5,316), touchdowns (43), completions (485) and attempts (719) in 2021, but the Buccaneers lost at home to the Los Angeles Rams in the divisional round.

"Tom Brady loves to play football as much as anyone I have ever been around," Buccaneers coach Bruce Arians said. "As Tom said, his place right now is on the football field. He is still playing at a championship level and was as pro-



Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady (12) throws a pass against the Los Angeles Rams during the first half of an NFL divisional round playoff football game Jan. 23, 2022, in Tampa, Fla.

Associated Press

ductive as anyone in the league last season. We are ecstatic that he decided to continue playing and working toward winning another championship."

Brady cited his desire to spend more time with his wife, supermodel Gisele Bündchen, and three children when he decided to walk away from the game on Feb. 1. But he changed his mind about staying home, a day after attending the Manchester United match against Tottenham Hotspur. Brady sat with the Glazer Family, who own Manchester United and the Buccaneers.

His reversal sent shock waves throughout the sports world, and his teammates and Buccaneers

fans reacted with jubilation. All-Pro right tackle Tristan Wirfs called it "unreal." Receivers Mike Evans and Chris Godwin shared their joy in emojis.

Giants safety Logan Ryan said Brady's return is "good for football." Rams star cornerback Jalen Ramsey tweeted: "THANK YOU! throw that last touchdown on somebody else."

Many Hall of Fame players across several sports returned to playing after retiring, including Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson and Bob Cousy in the NBA, Brett Favre and Reggie White in the NFL, Guy Lafleur and Mario Lemieux in the NHL. The Buccaneers are hopeful star tight end Rob Gronkowski also returns.

Brady convinced his buddy to unretire to join him in Tampa in 2020. The team lost Pro Bowl guard Ali Marpet, who retired at age 28. But Godwin is staying after getting the franchise tag. Brady's decision comes right before the NFL free agency period begins. The Bucs have several key players set to hit the open market: running back Leonard Fournette, cornerback Carlton Davis, safety Jordan Whitehead, linebacker Jason Pierre-Paul, defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh, Gronkowski and others. They kept one of those key players when Pro Bowl center Ryan Jensen agreed to a three-year contract late Sunday night, his agent Mike McCartney said on

Twitter.

Brady's return should impact their decisions and the team's plans. Tampa's odds for winning the Super Bowl went from 25:1 to 7 1/2:1, tied with Green Bay for second-best behind Buffalo at 7:1, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

"We are thrilled that Tom has decided to come back this season," Bucs general manager Jason Licht said. "We said we would leave all options open for him should he reconsider his retirement and today's announcement is something we have been preparing for in recent days."

"Bruce and I have had plenty of conversations with Tom recently that led us to believe there was a realistic chance he would want to come back. Tom is the greatest quarterback of all time who is still playing at an elite level. With this decision now made, we will continue to move forward with our offseason plans to reload this roster for another championship run."

Brady is the NFL's career leader in yards passing (84,520) and TDs (624). He's the only player to win more than five Super Bowls and has been MVP of the game five times.

Brady has won three NFL MVP awards, been a first-team All-Pro three times and selected to the Pro Bowl 15 times. He is 243-73 in his career in the regular season and 35-12 in the playoffs.

He's back to build on all those numbers. □



Musher Brent Sass calls for his team to go as he departs the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in Unalakleet, Alaska on Saturday, March 12, 2022.

Associated Press

Brent Sass maintains Iditarod lead but cautious about Seavey

By **MARK THIESSEN**
Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Brent Sass hasn't seen another musher for hundreds of miles, a pretty good sign when you're leading the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

Sass arrived in the checkpoint at White Mountain at 11:05 a.m. Monday and picked up \$2,500 for being first into the community.

White Mountain is where mushers must take a mandatory eight-hour layover before making the final 77-mile (124-kilometer) push along Alaska's western coastline and the Bering Sea ice to the finish line in Nome.

"No way, not quite yet," he told a film crew Sunday night for the Iditarod Insider website when asked if he's allowing himself to

start thinking about the finish line.

"We're not there yet," Sass said when he stopped at the checkpoint in the village of Koyuk. "It's been a good run, but he's still right back there."

Sass was referring to Dallas Seavey, the five-time champion who has been running in second place behind Sass. □